

ACTION LEARNING FOR CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

Revising an innovation that almost failed

INTRODUCTION

A curriculum innovation project in 2007 involving reciprocal peer group teaching during a 5 week module on Primary Care for 5th year medical students received very negative feedback. This project sent out to revise this innovation.

CHOSEN METHODOLOGY

Action Learning involving iterative cycles of "Reflect, Act & Learn".

THE DESIRED OUTCOMES

This module should:

- offer a learning opportunity that is different to a hospital based experience;
- reinforce previous theoretical learning;
- be relevant to future practice;
- be evaluated by students as an important part of their training;
- result in further development of the educational skills of the involved faculty; and
- have a positive impact on the community.

REFLECTION: WHAT WAS STOPPING US FROM ACHIEVING THIS?

Students had reported in 2007 that:

- the experiences in the various community sites were disjointed;
- peer teaching meant that they had not been taught by experts;
- the syllabus had not been adequately covered;
- they felt ill prepared for the block test; and
- they felt their time and money had been wasted.

ACTION: What did we decide to do ?

- Start with one week of intensive training in clinical skills
- Use reciprocal peer teaching in the revision of specific clinical skills
- Spend 3 weeks at a single community clinic for multiple hands-on learning opportunities as opposed to the previous year where they spent 5 mornings or less often in the role of observer
- Meet in small groups for a weekly reflection session with a facilitator

LEARNING: What did the students report ?

- They enjoyed the service learning experience
- Working in one clinic gave them a sense of belonging & purpose
- They felt they were achieving their goal of becoming a doctor
- Their confidence in their clinical skills improved
- They developed a new vigour for learning

THE FINAL OUTCOME

The revised block resulted in:

- Improved curriculum development skills of the academic faculty
- An enhanced learning experience by the students
- Positive feedback from the nurses and patients in the clinics
- The overall evaluation score by the students of the block improved from 2.7 to 7.81